The Man on the Burning Tightrope

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/7334059.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warnings:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence, Major Character Death
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Jack Crawford, Bella Crawford, Beverly Katz, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham
Additional Tags:	Circus, Alternate Universe - Circus, Carnival, Canon-Typical Violence, Original Character Death(s), but it affects Will a lot so I included it in the warnings, backgound jimmy price/brian zeller, background bella crawford/jack crawford, Slow Burn, will is 17, Hannibal is a Cannibal, eventually I'll earn that E rating
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2016-06-29 Updated: 2016-07-16 Words: 18,904 Chapters: 9/?

The Man on the Burning Tightrope

by fullmoonpill

Summary

Will remembers the strange magic of it all.
He remembers the twirling colors of the carousel as his father tugged on his arm. The red and yellow magic of the tents hiding mysteries and power behind them, the blinking lights and night air had mystified him. He was pulled into the attractions like a moth to the light.
The enchantment wore off within a week.

The circus AU no one asked for.

Notes

So I'm kind of obsessed with circus's and this idea just wouldn't leave me. I'm setting this loosely in the early 1950's, for simplicity's sake. No beta

And the Band Begins to Play

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will remembers the strange magic of it all.

He remembers the twirling colors of the carousel as his father tugged on his arm. The red and yellow magic of the tents hiding mysteries and power behind them, the blinking lights and night air had mystified him. He was pulled into the attractions like a moth to the light.
The enchantment wore off within a week.
Will was nine when his father packed them into the worn Volkswagen and drove them along a lonely highway to the carnival site. He was already nervous, he knew that he had messed up and his father was angry at him. That was the purpose of the whole move. They had traveled up and down the Mississippi for Douglas Graham's various jobs, always moving coincidentally after Will got into trouble. It's not that Will meant to cause trouble. He couldn't help who he was. That's what his father always told him as they moved the scant possessions they owned into their van. "You're a good kid, Willy. I've never doubted it. Trouble just always finds you."

Will watched as his father talked with the man in the center of the carnival. The man was broad shouldered and dark skinned, his voice booming around the stands of food. Will watched, wringing his hands as he stood a couple feet away. "Grown up things Willy, don't worry." His father has said as he licked his up nervously and walked to meet the old man.

The adults seemed to finish their discussion and the man turned and walked towards Will. "Hi Will. I'm Jack Crawford." He said as he kneeled down to Will's level. Will kept his eyes firmly planted on the dusty ground. "It seems you're going to staying with us a while." Jack finished, smiling slightly at the nervous boy. Will gingerly raised his eyes to the bridge of his nose and attempted a smile.

After that day Will learned the ropes of the Crawford Carnivale. He learned that Crawford had recently inherited the carnival from his father, and that he was married to the tarot card reader named Bella. Will liked Bella, mostly because she always had kindness in her smile and seemed to soothe Jack's bite. Will's dad worked at setting up and deconstructing the tents after every town. In exchange, Will and Douglas got their own caravan and ate with the rest of the crew. Douglas didn't seem to mind the work, the few hours of strenuous work spaced between long days worked for him. And even better, Will seemed to get along with the crew better than he had adjusted to the water crested towns they had lived in before.

Will learned quickly at the carnival that he wasn't the strangest one there. That award may have gone to the lizard man, a thirty or some odd man named Nathan that had green scales inexplicably covering his face, neck and torso. Or perhaps Eleanor, the bearded lady who braided and jeweled the lengthy hair on her chin. Maybe even Alfred, the strong man who could lift a caravan without breaking a sweat. Will was surprised by the easy comfort he got with his new family. They barely batted an eye at the strange things that he said. Sure, they didn't understand what he meant, Will had resigned long ago that no one ever would, but they

didn't cause problems for he and his father. They were safe and closeted in this land of freaks.

As Will grew new members joined the carnival. Jack seemed to have a talent for identifying the most useful parts of people and utilizing them for the crowds. There were two clowns named Jimmy and Brian who had grown up together on a farm in Kansas. Brian had been the son of a farm hand on Jimmy's father's ranch. They were sixteen when they were caught together in the barns. They ran away to the circus and found that their squabbling could be used as comedy. Reigning them in was Beverly Katz, the snake charmer from California who seemed unfamiliar with the concept of fear. Will often visited the acrobats, watching as Elliot and Reba curled their athletic forms across wires, wowing the audience with their agility.

All of these people were running from something, Will saw. Will watched their acts and saw their fears, their wants. Brian and Jimmy's performance was comedic, but Will felt the hard wire of fear of prosecution behind the act. Elliot's fear of falling from the wire was skewed by his delusion of unseen wings he was convinced were waiting to burst from his back. Reba's performance came from a defiance to her disabilitating blindness, her need to prove she didn't need dependence on anyone. Certainly not her crushingly doting family left behind in Connecticut. Of all the people in the carnival, he couldn't read only a handful of them. Will was afraid of the hard eyes behind the firebreather, Francis, and warily cautioned away from him. The game salesman, Mason, also frightened Will. More for what he saw in his sister, Margot, the dancer, than Mason's own eyes.

Will could relax only with a select few. Peter, the quiet and careful animal trainer who forgave the horse that hit him in the head as easily as breathing. Beverly, Jimmy, and Brian, who's banter usually blocked out the emotions that seeped to Will.
While Douglas was at work, Jack always found a job for Will to do. Whether it be helping in the kitchens, attempting to make enough food for the whole camp with their limited resources or mending the acrobats costumes with Reba. Will had even gotten pretty competent at walking the tightrobe. However, soon enough Jack saw for a talent in his extreme empathy and had him start training with Bella as a tarot reader.

"It's about telling people what they want." She had said when Will was 11 and had started training under her. "Each tarot is a vague statement, more of a subject prompt than actually predicting anything." Will was sitting in the velvet tent, the stifling Midwestern heat trapped in the heavy drapes. They had set up outside Chicago that morning, Douglas grumbling about the hard dusty ground that morning as he left their caravan. "Out in these plains," He had said slipping on his shoes, "The wind is the enemy. If there's a storm tonight, the tents will all uproot. No doubt." He had spit for good measure and then rubbed Will's curls reassuringly as he left the tent for work.

"The customer will give cues with their face, always." Bella spread the cards from her deck onto the table. They were fine cards, deep inks meeting gold embossed images. "There are 22 Major Arcana, all numbered except the fool. Of the minor Arcana, there are 4 suits; cups, pentacles, swords and wands." Will watched her long black nails flick against the various images. "The major arcana are trump cards, if one is pulled it's considered to represent who they are." She continued as she scooped up a group and put them to the side. Will admired how quickly her long fingers moved through the cards. "If you pull a cup, discuss

relationship or emotions. Pentacles bring up money, business trade. Swords mean ambition, courage, sometimes hatred and battle. The wands are associated with primal energy, spirituality, inspiration, determination, strength, intuition, creativity, ambition and expansion, original thought and the seeds through which life springs forth." Bella fondly stroked the three of wands, the man's back edged in gold turned against her. She suddenly looked up at Will. "The cards are prompts. Just keys to start getting into the customers heads. You usually have no problem with that."

And Will didn't. He continued his lessons with Bella until he knew the deck by heart. When he started performing for the patrons of the carnival, Bella dressed him in black silk and a purple sheer scarf with gold moons and suns printed on it. He had never touched such fine cloth. Bella hesitated as she smudged kohl around his eyes. "Will." She said sternly as she forced the boy to make eye contact with him. "Don't get lost in them. The patrons. They aren't to be helped. If you see something that scares you, you just come find me or Jack, alright?" Will nodded at Bella's concern and held her words of warning as he read the cards for others.

As the years went by, Will had made a name for himself in the carnival circuit. Carney's whispered of Crawford's boy who could read your mind, the tarot reader who wasn't a jip. Jack enjoyed the spoils of the most popular attraction and by the time Will was sixteen Bella moved on to help train the horses while Will took the mantle.

Although Will had found his place in the circuit, Douglas was getting older. Will watched as his father struggled through setting the tents and came home with groaning joints. The hair that had been salt and pepper when they first joined the circus had faded to a dusty gray. Will kept his worry tight in his chest as he brought extra portions from the cook tent to his father in the caravan and bit his lip enough to bleed when his father clutched his chest in pain when he thought Will wasn't looking.
Will was seventeen when he felt everything unhinged.

Chapter End Notes

> The Elliot that is the acrobat is Elliot Budish, aka the angel maker from Coquilles. I thought he would be perfect as an acrobat, imagining to have wings coming from his back

Bedtime is a Burning

Chapter Summary

> My fairest wheels are turning
> Hark the angels wail
> Bedtime is a-burning, burning
> We've got grace for sale
> How the worm is turning.
>
> -"Grace for Sale" Terrence Zdunich

Chapter Notes

> Quick note, this is the chapter with character death! It was pretty painful to write, so I can understand it can be triggering. I felt it was necessary to the story, but please take care of yourselves everyone!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will was seventeen when he felt everything unhinged.
He had woken early the August morning from a nightmare. His bed was soaked in sweat, as well as his last clean white shirt. He sighed, frustrated and vowed to do some laundry later. He looked out the window of the caravan to find it was barely dawn. A few of the camp had started wandering the site, his father would need to wake up soon to set up. Will rubbed his eyes, chasing away the dark edges of his nightmare. He felt rather than remembered the blood soaking his hands as he had smoothed his hands over the soft organs of the blonde man in his dream. He had choked and gasped beautifully, soft pleadings that had devolved to animals noises of desperation as Will had sliced his stomach and peeled pale skin back. Will shook the thoughts from his head as he shuffled to the dresser to change.
He knew the dreams came from the man he read for last night in Cincinnati. The man had been proud and muscular, arm slung around a small pale girl several years his junior. She had nervously tittered as they walked into Will's tent, the man's bravado filling the room with his red angry energy. Will had read them the cards dully, avoiding eye contact and relying on the old standbys rather than look at the man. He knew what he was. As soon as he had seen him, he had has seen blood drip down the arm hanging off of the woman, staining her white cotton dress. Whenever people like this came in, he avoided truly reading them. Bella's words of warning from years ago rang in his ears as he walked out of the tent, laughing with the pale girl.
Will sighed as he stuffed on his boots and slipped out the door. The wet morning air rested around him as he made his way to the cook tent. Jimmy gave a half-hearted wave to Will

from across the site, making his way to his caravan with some of his breakfast. Will returned it, numbly arriving at the tent and collected his breakfast as well as his fathers. When he kicked in the door to their caravan his father was already up, fixing the kettle for coffee. “Hey Willy.” Douglas said fondly, helping Will balance the dishes and gently landed them on the table. “Did you sleep much?” He said out of the corner of his mouth as he bit into a roll, turning back to the oven. Will shrugged evasively and slumped into one of the plastic chairs. There wasn’t a good way to answer the question. He could tell his father the truth, describe the blood and organs of his dream, but then Douglas would get that pinched look in his eyes. He would be distracted at work, worrying about his strange son and how he could help him. Distraction did not work well with manual labor. And worry certainly didn’t help Douglas Graham’s weak heart.

“Slept alright.” Will settled on as he dug into the gloppy oatmeal and watched his father pour the black coffee into his tin cup. He gratefully took a sip, trying not to seem too eager. “What are you setting up today?” Will asked over his cup, trying to distract. “Just three main tents, we got most of them done last night.” Douglas said as he shoveled eggs into his mouth. “I don’t like the ground here.” He grumbled as a last note. Douglas Graham always had something to say about the circus’s location. The wind was too much, the earth to rocky, the horizon too flat. He always mumbled these remarks with a feeling of indifference, resigned to the fact no one wanted to hear the manual laborers opinion on their set up. “As long as there are no problems, I’ll probably be able to visit your show tonight.” He added brightly. Douglas always liked to watch Will reading, pleased that his son had found use for his odd talents and was shining so brightly.

Will smiled back and started clearing the dishes from their breakfast. Will always felt a bit more nervous when his father watched his readings, always afraid for the inevitable time that he saw a man like the one from Cincinnati in front of his father. He could hide his reaction from the crowds, but he wasn’t so sure he could from his father. Douglas ruffled Will’s hair as he slammed out the door for work, leaving Will for the day to whittle away.

By the time dusk settled over the camp, the carnival lights were twinkling between the tents as the townspeople trickled in. Will watched two little girls wander with wonder in their eyes at the lights and attractions from his velvet tent. Usually it took until later for people to come in for a reading, other than occasional teenager it took until later for the adults to trample into his tent, bashful smiles and delicate hope. Will smiled to himself as the younger girl tugged the other one forward towards the carousel.

“I suppose the wonder has worn off for you.” Will whipped his head around to meet the stranger behind the accented remark. The man wore a finer suit than most, silk with spiraling red and black embroidery swirling in the material. He was broad and had his hands tucked behind him in a reserved manner. Will glanced his eyes to his chin, taking in the high cheekbones and the maroon eyes in his peripheral vision. Will had the fleeting thought that his eyes matched the color of blood from his dreams. “Are you here for a reading?” Will asked, jolted by the man’s sudden appearance. His accent and suit was enough to set him apart from most of his patrons.

The man smiled politely and stepped into the tent. “Yes, I think I would like a reading.” He said as he sat into the seat across from Will. Will hesitantly took the deck and started shuffling, glancing to the patron but not making eye contact. The man had an accent, meaning he had come from far away. However, they had settled in a Podunk town in the Midwest, what had the man come there for? The only reason Will could think of was the circus. His expensive suit was even finer up close, the intricate waves of black and red swirled in his vision. Will cleared his throat and lay the deck in front of him.

“Please cut the deck.” He murmured. The man reached his long elegant fingers to the deck, cutting it. Will decided to do a three card figuration. It was simple and quick, he already felt uneasy around the unusual stranger. “Is there anything in specific you want to learn from this reading?” Will asked, fishing for some indication what the gentleman was doing here. The man smiled politely and shook his head. “Nothing in particular.” Will sighed inwardly.
Will reached to pull the first card, flourishing his hand around the deck for effect. “The first card represents your past.” Will said, reaching down and lifting the seven of swords upside down. Will hummed, hiding his fear of the card. It was one filled with anger and revenge, a card to be seen as worse than the Devil card. “Something terrible happened to you in the past. You lost someone.” Will started, looking for any cues from the man. His face was placid, stone and cool. Frustrated, Will continued, “You got revenge, though. A crime for a crime, but the blood still lingers for you.” Will thought he might have seen a minuscule tightening around the man’s eyes, but the polite smile was fixed on his face. Frustrated, Will moved on. “The next card is the present.” Will said as he moved the deck closer to the man. Will indicated for the man to pick the next card.
“The emperor.” Will remarked, relaxing marginally. It was a much safer card. “This indicates that you have control of the anger from the past. You have a tight hold on your kingdom, and operate with a steely heart.” Will felt the card was accurate for the man in front of him, not giving anything away. “You are secure in all you have, but the card can also indicate a coldness. Perhaps left from behind, perhaps an ache of boredom.” Will continued, hoping for a reaction. Will hesitated, but decided to meet the man’s eyes. The cold red flowed before him, seeming to swirl like the sleeves of the man’s coat. He was harder to read than most that came through, but he felt something behind those dark eyes. “Your control in infinite.” Will murmured, not moving his eyes from the man. “And you hold your revenge close to your heart.” Again, Will was struck by the image of the blood in his dream earlier. “But… you want more. You want understanding.” Will finished, watching the man’s eyes change bit. Will tore his eyes from the man, collecting himself. The bread crumb of information had taken Will’s empathy much energy.
“Please, do continue.” The man said, delight edging his words. Will shook his head softly, remembering Bella’s warning. “The next card represents the future, or a message from the spirit world.” Will said dismissively, immediately wanting the reading to be over. There was a pause, then the man reached a flipped the card. The moon upside down revealed itself. Will hesitated with the reading, feeling the topic almost skew. “Things are going to change.” Will muttered, surprised by the feeling he was getting from the cards. Usually he read from the customer, but when reading the future card you had to go with your gut or make something up. “You will meet someone. And it will be… difficult.” Will continued, staring at the card hard. “Highly emotional. Can become negative or heated…” Will said, glancing up to the man to try and catch a reaction. The man gazed back. “The outcome will have to be your choice.” Will finished, giving up the cards and focusing on the man. “Your hold will be threatened.” Will finished, leaning back in his chair.
The man’s smile widened to an amused smirk and he also leaned back in his chair. “You are quite the reader.” The stranger remarked, attempting to meet Will’s eyes again. Will stared down stubbornly and started collecting his deck together again. “Thank you.” Will responded stiffly. “That’ll be 1.50$.” He held out the tin from the ground to the man. The stranger chuckled darkly and dropped two bills into the tin. “Keep the change.” He said, standing and straightening his jacket. Will nodded, trying to subconsciously urge the man to leave his tent. “I do hope we will meet again.” The man remarked, and reached out his hand for a shake. Will hesitated, unused to customers offering such respect. He stood and reached out his hand

to return the gesture and the man gripped his hand with sudden strength and pulled him in a bit closer. “I very much enjoyed our little talk.” The man purred within their close proximity. Bewildered, Will moved to pull his hand away, but the man had already dropped his iron grip and walked out the tent. Will blinked, off put by the gesture, but sat down quickly when he noticed 3 teenage girls whispering and looking into the tent. Will hadn’t noticed, but the sun had left as he had been doing the reading. The night was only just beginning, and it was time to go to work.

Will carefully packed the last of tents decorations into the trunk. The night had been busy, but the circus was finally starting to quiet down in the late night. He shook the tin, satisfied with the corresponding clunks of coin. It had been a pretty good night for him. After the stranger left, he had a steady stream of simple readings for the night. He had comforted a pair of twins who were moving different ways in life, a couple that had needed to talk, and a mother who was worried about her son’s new group of friends. On occasion, Will felt fulfilled doing the readings, helping people see their situation more clearly.

Will waved to Jimmy and Brian as they passed his tent, their loud argument giving warning of their arrival. “Will, has Jack mentioned to you about whether we are running the full season?” Jimmy called, approaching his tent. “Of course we’re doing a full season! He would have told us already if we couldn’t.” Brian interjected. Will laughed lightly, “He hasn’t said anything to me.” He responded neutrally. Jimmy scoffed. “He wouldn’t want to worry us, Jack wouldn’t tell us.” He remarked, shaking his head. Brian slumped into one of the seats in the tent. “Maybe you can read the cards for us, Will.” He joked, flipping through the deck on the table. Will laughed a little and took the cards from him into the trunk. “Because that always goes so well.” He responded sarcastically. The last time he had tried to read for Brian and Jimmy they had argued about every cards meaning, not only with Will but also with each other. “We’ve barely made it in the black these past couple tours.” Jimmy said somberly. “We may not be able to do the full tour.” Brian shook his head at him, getting back to his feet. “Jack would just trade some of us, make a smaller tour. He could easily make it on the smaller circuit.” The carnival was well know, enough to survive well on hitting smaller towns, but Jack insisted on arriving at the big cities as well. Jack’s pride and ambition cost them at shows like that. “Well, if you two get any offers, let me know. I’ll take your caravan when you leave.” Will said cheekily, and the guys laughed and said their goodbyes.

Will finished packing up and made his way back to the Graham caravan. His father hadn’t ended up visiting his show, but Will had seen him shortly before arriving at the tarot tent so he wasn’t too concerned. The wind blew the abandoned papers and trash across the plain as he walked. There was something comforting about the circus after everyone had cleared out, his family wandering around the large empty space. He saw Beverly hanging her clothes in their neighboring caravan and waved.

“I’m back.” Will shouted as he pushed through the screen door. When he received no answer, the panic switch was automatically on and ice slithered into his chest. He glanced down seeing the kitchen empty, and the door to his father’s room closed. He’s just sleeping, Will soothed himself as he rushed through the caravan, papers and books falling down in his wake. “Dad?” He called out again, his voice coming out as a harsh bark. He shoved the door open, hitting the side of his dad’s head, his body lying on the floor. “Dad, get up!” Will shouted again, jumping down to him. He shook his arm, shuddering and retracting his arm at the cold weight.

“No, dad c’mon!” Will leaned forward again, taking some steadying breaths and touched his chest. It was cold, no familiar heartbeat beneath his hand. “Christ.” Will whispered and suddenly pushed back with his feet until his back hit the wall. “Dad please.” He whispered,

his breath coming out as sobs. “Please don’t leave me alone.” He whimpered as his cheeks felt wet. “Don’t leave me alone.” Will heaved, his head falling into his hands. His head swam, he knew this was going to happen, there were signs, goddammit why didn’t he do anything? He jumped forward again and shook his dad’s arm. This was just a dream, just another bad dream. “Wake up please!” He screamed, shaking the arm as if the force would jolt his dad from a curse. Will heard the screen door slam near the front of the caravan but he was too busy shaking his dad to look up. “Will? I heard you yelling are you…” Beverly trailed off as she came into the doorway. “Oh. Oh Will.” She said with such soft acceptance that Will felt rage engulf him. “He’s not dead, he’s okay we just have to…” Will trailed off, bit sure what they had to do. He shook his dad’s arm again. “Dad cmon.” He whispered. “Will…” Beverly whispered, grasping his shoulder and pulling him back. “Wait, it’s fine!” Will screamed pulling from her. Beverly tightened her arm and pulled him to the doorway. “No!” He screamed, the screen door slamming again. “Will?” Came Bella’s voice from the front. “Get Jack.” Beverly’s voice said as Will attempted towards his father again. He was dead. Really and truly dead. Will shuddered a sob as the breath he didn’t know was holding stuttered out. He was alone.

Chapter End Notes

I did the best with the tarot card reading. My mum used to do it professionally so I'm pretty familiar with it, but I kept it as simple and clear as possible.

Again, comments are gold! Thank you for reading :)

His Cup of Sorrow

Chapter Summary

He says the choices were given
Now you must live them
Or just not live
But do you want that?
-"Haligh, Haligh, A Lie, Haligh" Bright Eyes

Chapter Notes

This is gonna get kinda sad people

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next few days Will felt oddly like he was underwater. He remembered some things too vividly and other things was a blur. He remembered the tiles of the cremator's floor; geometric brown diamonds that seemed to be in the shape of flowers against white. He remembered the chip in the corner, spreading a crack across the rest of the square. He feels rather than remembers the night, when Jack came into the caravan, Beverly carrying him to hers, Brian and Jimmy coming through; all strained comforts and concerned looks. The carnival people all seem to hold a breath when he passes. Reba comes by early the next morning and makes him breakfast that he doesn't remember eating but abstractly doesn't remember not eating. Bella seems to reinstate her position of mentor and makes him have supper with her and Jack at night, the dinner filled with carefully chosen small talk and light hand pats.
By the fourth day of catatonia Will recognizes the ache in his chest. A familiar null ache, but more encompassing than he ever thought could be. He lays in bed that morning thinking carefully chosen thoughts; He's gone. He's never going to walk through the door again. He's never going to hug you again. It's over.
Then: You have to get up. Shit happens. Now you have to live with it.
Or not live.
Do you want that?
Will hides in his bed for another couple of hours until Beverly drags him out of bed.

When Will starts to return to the world again, there's nothing familiar about it. Every single caravan and person seems different to him. He remembers something his dad used to say. "There's always a before and after. There will be a couple in your life. I've had my fair share. What matters most is how you react in the after." Will doesn't think he's reacting well. He hasn't gone back to his caravan or his tarot tent, Bella returning to the post until "Will feels

up to it." Jack had sounded reluctant to say the words, Bella behind him switching between a hostile glare at Jack and a look of motherly concern at Will.
The problem is, every single thing about his once carnival family reminds him of his dad. His dad joking with the other set up guys, his dad carefully putting up the tents while grumbling about the dirt, his dad waiting in line for food. Every time he passes a caravan and doesn't see his dad doing repairs he feels the hope he didn't know had festered wither in his chest. It's usually easier just to stay in bed, sheet over his head, so he doesn't see anything. Will had tried to sleep all day, but the nightmares were bad enough during the night. Blood seeped at every corner of his nights, his father's dead body having guest appearances in the horror show. One night, his dreams melded, and he felt his hands wrap around his father's neck, watching the life drain from his eyes. Will hadn't slept for 3 nights after that.
Bella seems to catch on to what's happening first. He catches her whispering to Jack before one of their nightly dinners, Jack's face looking frustrated. "He sees his father everywhere. He can't stay here." She says, her voice muffled by her hand. Jack shakes his head angrily, Will thinks distantly he looks like a bulldog that is in threat of having one of its toys taken from his mouth. "We're his family, Bella, he can't leave us." Jack barks hoarsely, not seeming to have a whispering voice. "His father was his family. Nothing can replace that." Bella responded, sharper than Will had ever heard. The conversation seemed to be over, they sat down for the dinner and Will sighed and joined.
Will didn't think much of the conversation until Jack walked into Beverly's caravan the next afternoon. Will had unofficially moved into Beverly's caravan, after she had gathered some of his clothes and dropped the bundle onto an air mattress in her living room. They were sitting at her table, Will picking at the stir fry creation Beverly had made out of whatever was in her mini fridge. "Will." Jack said uncomfortably looking around the messy caravan. "Can we talk?" Beverly looked up from the haphazard meal and glared at Jack, hearing the same tone that Will heard. This was business. Will just nodded lethargically and followed Jack out of the screen door.
"I know you've been having a hard time." Jack started, his words sounding false in his mouth. It seemed to Will like he had picked something from a get well soon card and hoped it fit the situation. "And we…I…Would like to do anything that could help alleviate your… pain." Jack continued, slightly stunted. Will realized that "we" was probably supposed to mean the carnival. Jack coughed, a signal the topic would change slightly. "There's someone who's going to be visiting the site for the next couple days. He has a circus that tours Europe…he's interested in adding some new acts." Jack gently gripped Will's shoulder, attempting to force eye contact. Will stubbornly focused on the tip of his nose. "He's indicated that he would be very interested in adding you to his roster." Jack shifted again, uncomfortable that he had to talk about feelings again. "Now I'm not telling you what to do, but we agree that a change of scenery might be good for you. All I'm asking is that you give this guy a chance. He's bona fide, I've known him for a while. He won't screw you on a contract either, I'll make sure of it. Just give him a chance, okay?" Finished, Jack stepped away from Will. Will turned towards the setting up carnival, watching Reba and Francis laugh under one of the tents. He nodded numbly. "What's his name?' Will asked, his voice coming out unusually gravely. He hadn't been speaking much, he realized. "Hannibal. Hannibal Lecter." Jack said, satisfied that the conversation had been done with. He clapped Will on the shoulder once, then turned to walk into the circus.

The next day, Beverly came back from practice and attempted to get Will out of the caravan. "Cmon Will, you gotta see this guy." She said, her sheer excitement seeming to fuel her as

she shoved Will into a flannel shirt. “Who?” Will asked, curious despite the manhandling. “Hannibal Lecter. His name is as ridiculous as he is. Cmon, it will cheer you up.” Beverly mumbled as she finally got Will into his coat and his shoes. Will sighed as he was shoved out the door and into the carnival. Unfortunately, it was dusk turning to night and the fairgrounds were full of families. Will and Beverly expertly maneuvered the crowds towards the large tent. “He’s watching the acrobats show at 8. It’ll be a perfect time to see him. You don’t even have to talk to him.” Beverly said as they waved at the bouncer, Franklyn. Franklyn waved back excitedly, glad to have been noticed. Beverly and Will shuffled into the tent, following the crowd until Bev suddenly grabbed Will’s arm to hide behind a beam. “He’s right there, front row with Jack.” Will squinted into the shuffling crowd, seeing half of the back on someone’s head beside Jack. “I can’t really see him.” Will responded, already grouchy. All the people brushing against him was too much after his week of enclosure. “When the lights go down, we can up front. The lights will be on them.” Beverly whispered conspiratorially. Will knew she was getting a kick out of sneaking around, but that she was also doing it for him so he could avoid contact. He nodded and they waited for the lights to go down. As it went dark, the crowd hushed down and started to sit. Will watched as the music started and Reba and Elliot waltzed out into the spotlight, ready for their act. “Cmon.” Beverly whispered as they tip toed through the crowd and down the stairs. Will stuck behind Beverly as they walked between the beams. “Ok.” Beverly mumbled as they leaned against the beam closest to the stage. “Look.” Will leaned reluctantly over her shoulder. Jack leaned away from the man and Will breath caught. The man sitting next to him was the stranger from the card reading. His suit was as spectacular and strange as the one he had been wearing that night, this time silver and black striped with the black shirt and vest. His high cheekbones and angular face seemed sharper underneath the reflected lights, and his hair seemed lighter and more silver than Will remembered. “Well?” Beverly said beside him, taking his silence for something else. Suddenly Hannibal’s nose twitched and he turned his gaze to the beam they were against. Although Will knew he shouldn’t be able to see them in the dark, he felt the man’s eyes lock directly onto his. Will watched the maroon eyes widen and watched as his mouth curved into a full smile. Will didn’t remember his teeth being so sharp. He felt held in the gaze on him, the brown red of his eyes bringing him back to his nightmares. “Will?” Beverly said, feeling him frozen beside her. Will snapped out of his trance and immediately felt his muscles tense and spring. Before he knew what he was doing his legs had carried him shock through the tent. He heard Beverly’s voice calling from behind him. Will spared a glance behind him as he got to the tent edge, and saw Hannibal’s teeth gleaming in the dark. As he got into the night air, he immediately fell into Franklyn’s figure. “Will? Are you okay?” He said flustered, as he grabbed Will’s elbows before he could fall. “Let me go!” Will shouted, ripping himself from the man’s arms. Will felt guilt as he saw Franklyn’s face fall, but his feet kept him running into the fairground.

Will’s head cleared as he escaped to the food and game stands. The crowds had thinned here, the people heading more towards where the major shows were. The night had descended on the camp, the cooler air feeling better against Will. He tried to think of why he ran. It had felt like such a panic response, he felt like a cornered animal. Which didn’t make sense. The man had never threatened him, and he was nothing but cordial towards Will during the reading. But it was those teeth. That smile that made him think that all the polite smirks he had been given in the tarot tent were nothing close to genuine. That feral smile, all sharp teeth and red gums. “Will!” He heard a call and immediately sped up his walk. He saw Mason leering from his the shooting game tent ahead of him. “What brings you this way, kiddo?” Mason murmured from his perch on top of the stand. Will realized just how much the crowd had

thinned and attempted to bolt, the panic from the tent returning. Mason grabbed the cuff of his coat and dragged him closer. “Now that’s no way to act, sweetheart. Let’s talk.” Mason said, pulling Will against the front of the stand. Will tried to pull away, but Mason only grabbed his waist with the other hand. “Why so shy?” Mason leered and tried to make eye contact with Will. Will stubbornly stared at the gash on his cheek where Margot had managed to plant a knife before Jack had pulled her off him. “Oh I know why.” Mason said, heaving Will’s skinny frame onto the edge of the stand, seating him on the plywood. His hand on Wills collar moved to his cheek. “You’re still so sad about your Daddy, right?” Will froze, anger swirling with the panicked fear in his chest. Will pulled again but Mason’s grip was tight, pressing his legs into the wooden shelf of the stand. “That’s okay sweetie. Such a sad thing. But he was so old.” Mason purred, leaning closer as Will pulled his head as far from the blonde as much as he could. “You know, if you need someone to take care of you, I’ve always been quite fond of you.” Mason continued. “Those big, wide blue eyes…” Mason panted against his cheek. Will strained against his hold.

“Excuse me.” Came an accented voice from the behind Will. Mason glanced over his shoulder at the voice, giving Will an opening. Will loosed his leg from Mason and kicked at his knee with everything he had. Mason collapse with a yelp and Will tumbled over the edge of the stand into the dusty ground. Will felt hands under his shoulders hefting him up and turned to see Hannibal. The man smiled down at him as he brushed off Will’s shoulders. They turned as they heard Mason leap up from behind the stand.

“Who the fuck are you?” Mason snarled, jumping over the stand and looming toward them. Hannibal shifted to Will’s front and the brunette gratefully stepped back behind him. Hannibal just stood still, staring impassively at Mason. “It’s best to keep our companies with those who desire it, don’t you think?” He said softly, but Will heard the undercurrent of steel within it. Mason seemed to also, he stopped his advancements and shifted his gaze to Will behind the man. Will jumped a little and felt Hannibal lean a little more into Mason’s eye line. Mason’s eyes flickered back to Hannibal’s and his face suddenly split into a salacious grin. “You’re right. See yah later Willy!” Mason said, waving and walking back into his stand.

Will glanced up at Hannibal but the man only looked back down at him. “Are you alright?” He said softly, lightly placing his hand on his back as he steered them away from the games. Will glanced back, seeing Mason wave back at him, his smile growing. “For now.” Will muttered. He dreaded the next time he would be near Mason. Will turned back to Hannibal and they road they were walking back to the tents. “I’m lucky you were there. I guess I should thank you.” Will mumbled, his panic slowly leaving him. “You could, but it wasn’t luck. I followed you when you ran from the tent.” Hannibal said airily as they came to the main field. Will blinked, remembering his episode in the tents. Will felt resentment at being caught off guard twice in one night. “I was quite surprised to see the visiting ring leader had come to my tarot tent under a false identity.” Will muttered icily. Hannibal seemed amused. “There was no false identity. I just didn’t disclose who I was or why I was there.” He responded as they walked along. Will laughed a bit at the evasion. Hannibal had obviously come into the tent in an attempt to see how Will would read for any customer coming through. They had stopped their walk outside the tent. Will heard the band play within it, the tune for the clowns. He pictured Brian and Jimmy performing their act and loosened a bit more. “And? How’d you like the reading?” Will mumbled, scuffing his sneaker into the ground. Despite the man’s false presentation, he still respected his opinion. Will felt Hannibal’s eyes try to make contact with his but Will kept his eyes stubbornly on his shoe in the dust. He suddenly felt a soft hand under his jaw and with wide eyes he looked up. The red

eyes demanded attention and he reluctantly met them. “It was exquisite, dear Will.” Will swallowed at the casual endearment and the man’s lips quirked slightly into a smile. “You truly see people, don’t you? Everything they are?” Will nodded in the hold and Hannibal’s smile widened, pointed teeth peeking out. “Amazing. Pure empathy.” Will gazed back into the bloody eyes, feeling the delight behind them.
“Will? There you are!” Beverly’s voiced shattered the bubble and Will pulled away from Hannibal’s grip. Beverly glanced at the man before pulling Will into a tight hug. “I was worried about you, where did you run to?” Will glanced at Hannibal above Beverly’s shoulder. “Just some trouble with Mason. I’m fine now.” Will mumbled. Beverly pulled out of the hug and held Will by his shoulders. “What’d Mason do?” She asked, her eyes sparking with anger. Will just shrugged, Beverly knew Mason was always creepy with Will. “I’ll kill him.” Beverly muttered angrily. “Maybe murder shouldn’t be the first resort.” Hannibal said from beside Will. Beverly looked to the smirk and grinned in return. “With Mason, it should be.” She said cheekily and let go of Will. “Let me guess.” She said, glancing between the two men. “Hannibal was your knight in shining armor.” Will blushed bright red and Hannibal chuckled. Will gave a quick glare at him but Beverly had already devolved into a full throated laugh. “Oh man. You are telling me everything.” She said to Will, wiping tears from her eyes. Will sighed, rubbing his face and wishing he hadn’t left his bed this morning.
“Hannibal! I see you’ve met Will.” Jack’s booming voice came through as he approached them in the field. “And the gang’s all here. I’ll see you later Will!” Beverly said as she bolted towards the caravan. Will sighed, not ready for a conversation with Jack. He turned as the large man approached. “What do you think of our best tarot reader?” Jack said, clapping a hand on Will’s shoulder. Will barely repressed the flinch. Hannibal watched the interaction with interest. “Will, this is Dr. Hannibal Lecter, the ring leader of the European syndicate, Cirque Des Horreurs.” Jack said, smiling widely. “Doctor? I didn’t realize ring leading required a medical license.” Will muttered. Jack frowned at him but Hannibal smiled. “It doesn’t. This wouldn’t be my first career.” He said smoothly. Will blinked as he realized Hannibal had managed to give away nothing while still answering. “Well, we sure are glad to have you on board with us, aren’t we?” Jack said, prompting Will. Will gazed at the ground despondently. “It’s been a long night, I really should be getting back.” He muttered, attempting to extract himself from anymore of Jack’s schmoozing. “Please, allow me to escort you.” Hannibal said, placing his hand on Will’s back again. Jack beamed, ‘I’m sure he would appreciate that Doctor!” Will pursed his lips but nodded as Hannibal steered them away.
“Our friend Jack can be a bit overbearing, can’t he?” Hannibal mused as they started towards the caravans. “He thinks I should join your circus. Doesn’t want a broken pony in his stables.” Will spit out, surprised at himself for the venom. Will glanced at Hannibal, expecting some alarm but only finding faint amusement. “Do you think you’re a broken pony, Will?” Hannibal asked as they winded around through the tents. Will snorted. “What are you, a psychiatrist?” He muttered. He was surprised to hear a light laugh from the man. “It seems you have guessed my first career.” Will felt a smile spread across his face. “A psychiatrist? Really?” Will laughed a bit. “I guess that must come in handy, handling a circus.” Hannibal glanced at him. “I suppose it does.” They reached Beverly caravan and stopped. “It was a pleasure to meet you officially, Will.” Hannibal said, looking down at him. Will focused on Hannibal’s third button, a small silver circle. Will felt the soft hand on his cheek. “You aren’t overly found of eye contact, are you?’ Hannibal murmured while guiding his face up. “Eyes tell too much.” Will said, focusing again on the maroon eyes. It struck him that he had made more eye contact with this man in a day then he would with anyone for a

month. It was something about the still surface, it drew him in to try and see the murky water beneath. He searched the bloody eyes but felt only curiosity. Hannibal pulled away this time, dropping his hand from his face and grasping Will's hand. "Can I see you tomorrow morning?" He said, stroking Will's knuckles. Will shivered and nodded. Hannibal smiled and brought Will's hand to a kiss. "Until then." He said against Will's palm. He dropped the hand and turned. Will blinked and heard a muffled snicker behind him in the caravan. "Shit." He muttered, realizing Bev was inside and likely saw their whole interaction. He braced himself and pushed through the screen door.

Chapter End Notes

"Maybe murder shouldn't be the first resort." Hannibal, as if, you bag of dicks

Just a heads up, I plan on finishing the whole work by July 1st (new fiscal year means I'll be working a lot more at the factory)

He's Thrown his Curses at the Moon

Chapter Summary

I wont go whistling by your grave
If you don’t go whistling in my mind
Welcome to a place where nightmares
Are the best part of my day.
-"Dead Hearts" Dead Man's Bones

Beverly had dragged over every small detail Will provided until he feigned complete exhaustion. After continuous fake yawns interjected between nearly every word, Bev left him alone reluctantly. Draped across the air mattress in the dark, Will dissected his conversation with Hannibal. The man was trouble, anyone could tell that. He came off reserved and cordial but Will knew there had to be something more. Something that he felt in the toothy smile he had gotten in the dark of the tent that night. The man seemed especially fixated on Will as well. Hannibal had seemed to take every opportunity to engage contact with Will, be it with their eyes or physical. Will thought back to the hand to his back as Hannibal guided Will away from Mason and back to Beverly’s caravan. There was a degree of…possession to it. Did the doctor really want him in his circus this bad? Did Will want to join his circus? Will hesitated at the idea of joining any circus named literally the French version of “Circus of Horrors.” Even though the Crawford Carnival was his home, he couldn’t picture his future here without his father. It was tempting, this prospect so delicately placed before him, to escape everything and start over. Begin in a new place where his father’s ghost wasn’t haunting him.

Will sighed and turned over on the mattress. He could do it. Leave with Hannibal. Traveling Europe was a tempting ideal, he had never been out of the country before, except for the occasional Mexican or Canadian show. He knew some French from his father, but knew no other languages that could come in handy in a European tour. He supposed none of the carneys would know many languages. Will reminded himself to ask Hannibal in the morning about what kind of shows his circus had. If he was going to take this proposition seriously, he should know more information. Sighing, he tightened his quilt closer to him and resolved to think about it in the morning.

Will was awoken by the screen door slamming in the front of the caravan. He blinked as the midmorning light poured over the mattress and pushed the blankets aside as he saw Beverly run to her room. “What’s going on?” Will called out, wiping sleep from his eyes. Usually Beverly was in bed until at least noon. “Franklyn!” She called from her room. Will blinked. “What about him?” He said, standing and putting on some jeans from the ground. Beverly walked back out to the kitchen, eyes wide. “He’s dead. They found his body on the edge of the site. It’s pretty brutal.” She said, shaking her head as she headed back to her room. Will stared after her shocked. He remembered running into Franklyn last night, his panic and the hurt look on Franklyn’s face. Will would never get the chance to apologize to him. Who

would hurt him? Will walked to where Beverly was sitting, applying makeup. “Do they know who did it?” He asked, leaning against the doorframe. “No idea.” Beverly said as she curled her lashes. “Apparently it’s a mess. Brian said he was dissected, all his skin pulled back and organs everywhere. Bella is the one who found him, she’s pretty messed up about it.” Will hummed, concerned.

Beverly looked up at him and glanced at his rumpled appearance. “Enough about that though, you better fix yourself for your breakfast date with Lecter.” She remarked, waggling her eyebrows. Will scoffed, but turned to put on some clean clothes. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard the term ‘breakfast date’ before.” Will responded as he smelled a flannel and hoped it wasn’t dirty. “He’s European, I’m sure it’s a thing there.” Beverly said as she breezed to him and tried to tame his unruly curls. “You really should condition or something.” She huffed, frustrated with the lack of cooperation. Will slapped away her hands and dug into his duffle for socks. Beverly sighed, throwing her hands in the air as she turned to look for her purse. A knock sounded on the door as soon as Will finished putting on his work boots. Beverly paused her search to grin at Will suggestively. Will rolled his eyes. “I’ll see you later.” He said as he pushed out the door.

Hannibal was standing outside the caravan wearing suit that could quite possibly been made out of a rug. “Good morning, Will.” Hannibal said cordially, offering a polite smile. Will returned it tiredly, glancing around the field. He watched the site builders deconstruct the tents for the move tonight and felt an ache. “I thought we might eat in my caravan, I have prepared a meal there.” Hannibal broke into Will’s reverie. Will blinked at him, realizing that he hadn’t even thought of where Hannibal was living. “Sure, that sounds great.” Will said, looking at his paisley tie. “Shall we?” Hannibal affirmed, placing his hand on Will’s lower back. Will resisted the urge to pull away, remembering his thoughts of last night.

“Did you hear about Franklyn?” Will said, studying the man’s reaction. Hannibal gave nothing away as he led them across the site. “Yes, quite unfortunate what happened.” He responded evenly. “Yeah, I guess the body was pretty messy. Probably more than angry town folk.” Will murmured, still digesting the news. Every once in a while there was a mess with some small town not liking the carneys around. Will carefully skirted around a memory of him and his father at a diner, the glares from other patrons. “It is a tragedy, no doubt. I hope I will be able to distract you from such morbidity.” Hannibal remarked, as they continued to the edge of the camp. Will smiled fleetingly as they reached the caravan. Will was surprised how clean it was, dust obviously washed off frequently. It was covered in mahogany paneling, the windows a shiny glass. As they walked inside, Will saw that the neatness and cleanliness continued. The kitchen took up more room than the standard, the stove larger than Will had seen in the few caravans that even had one.

“Please, sit.” Hannibal indicated, gesturing towards dark wooden chairs curved around a table glasses and utensils. Will sat and watched as Hannibal reached into the oven and removed two steaming plates. “A basic breakfast scramble. I’m afraid I have rather low resources, otherwise I would have provided a more complex meal.” Hannibal said as he put the plate down in front of Will. “It looks great. Trust me, this is a much better meal than I’m used to.” Will said, thinking of the stir frys or failed attempts at pasta he and Beverly usually consumed. Hannibal sat down in front of him and Will took that as a cue to begin eating. He gasped a bit at the first bite, the spices in the sausage perfectly complimenting the ridiculously fluffy eggs. “This really is delicious, thank you.” Will complimented as he shoveled another forkful into his mouth.

Hannibal smiled at him from across the table, pleased. “Thank you. I managed to bring some dried spices from Europe, however, the rest I had to locally source.” Hannibal poured them

both glasses of chilled water. “I’ve meant to ask you about that.” Will remarked as he slowed his devouring of the scramble. “Where do you go for the European tour, specifically?” Will continued as he took another bite. Hannibal smiled, glad that Will was considering the unofficial proposal seriously enough to ask questions. “It depends on the run. On occasion we play it by ear, but usually we keep to large cities in the east.” Hannibal responded, carefully placing perfect portions of sausage and egg on his fork. “And what kind of shows do you put on?” Will continued, glancing up as far to make faux eye contact with Hannibal’s nose. “We have several. We usually operate as this carnival does; smaller tents during the evening. We later have the large tent present the three ring shows. I have not yet decided who is going to be in the three rings this fall, but in the past we have had several in rotation. I believe the acrobats were in one, the animal performances in another. The third is usually up to negotiation. Bedelia, our knife thrower, held the act this past year. After the main performances, we have oddity tents perform for the later crowds.” Hannibal finished. Will nodded, feeling reassured that they operated more or less like the Crawford Carnival. “Jack tells me you are a rather accomplished tightrope walker.” Hannibal remarked. Will shook his head and smiled, imagining Jack trying to talk up his abilities to Hannibal. “I’m okay at it. And I can’t do any other acrobatics, so don’t even think about it.” Will breathed out. Hannibal cocked and eyebrow and leaned away from the table. “Most who start at the carnival circuit young try their hand at acrobatics. You didn’t?” He asked, his interest apparently peaked. Will snorted, putting down his fork on the now empty plate in front of him. His thoughts flickered to the diner again, his dad’s face pinched and concerned surrounded by the fluorescent lights and pastel walls. “I was injured.” Will settled on dismissively. Hannibal nodded, although Will could tell that he was not finished with the topic, only that it would be packed away for a later date.

“I take it you are considering my proposal of joining us this fall?” Hannibal asked as he lifted the glass of water to his lips. Will’s eyes followed the motion and nodded, looking away. Hannibal smiled, teeth peeking through as he lowered the glass. “I am glad to hear it, Will. I think you would enjoy our little circus.” Will nodded again, biting his lip between his teeth. Hannibal leaned forward towards Will. “I’m afraid we are on a time table, Will. I leave at the end of September so that we may start our tour.” Will nodded, understanding he had about 2 weeks to decide. “I do hope you will be leaving with me.” Hannibal said softly, his hand fleetingly touching Will’s cheek before turning away and guiding him towards the door. Will watched his feet as he walked down the steps of the caravan. “Thank you for breakfast, Dr. Lecter.” He said as his boots hit the dust. Hannibal smiled as he turned away. “The pleasure is mine, Will.”

Becoming Ghosts to Dream of

Chapter Summary

Tuning out of the poison
Every waking day
Intolerance to overcome
Fortunes won by the boys with the guns
We are alone
Nowhere to run
-"Bernadette" IAMX

Chapter Notes

Some fun in this chapter! And by fun I mean violence

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After breakfast with Hannibal, Will went to visit Bella to see if she was alright. Jack seemed to have taken up the mantle as guard dog as he walked to their caravan. The man eventually allowed Will in, leaving the warning that they were going to start moving the site at noon. He walked in to find her sitting at the kitchen table, wrapped in one of her silk robes. She perked up from where she was nursing her coffee when she heard Will. “Will!” She exclaimed, pulling out a chair. Will smiled back appreciatively and joined her at the table. “It’s good to see you.” She said as she poured him some coffee as well. “It’s good to see you too.” Will said sincerely. He had been avoiding Jack since their last conversation, hoping to avoid more hinted encouragements to join Hannibal’s circus. Avoiding Jack meant in turn avoiding Bella. “How are you feeling?” Will continued, immediately wincing at his tactlessness. Bella smiled softly as she put down her mug. “I guess I could be better.” She responded evenly. “I remember when we hired him. Jack wasn’t sure about him, but I encouraged it.” She murmured softly, keeping her eyes on the coffee. Will shook his head, wishing he knew how to comfort her. “I just wish I knew what happened. The body… it was…something else.” Bella frowned as she stirred the coffee. “It wasn’t like it usually is, when one of us dies.” Will nodded, remembering the first time he saw one of the dead carneys, skin black and purple, face undefinable. It was always a death filled with fear and rage at something different. “His skin… it didn’t even look like skin. It was turned back from him, like a dissection table….” Bella laughed in the middle of her sentence and Will looked at her curiously. She shook her head lightly, “I remember the first thing I thought was that it looked like a book, with the pages all flapping out.” She choked out, a hysterical edge breaking out through her even tone. She took a breath in, seeming to collect herself. She

suddenly looked up from her coffee and at Will. “I don’t like the way things are going. It feels like this is only the start. I want you to be careful, okay Will?” She gritted out, grabbing Will’s hand across the table. Will fought the urge to jump at the sudden touch. “Okay, Bella, don’t worry about it. Everything will be alright.” Will soothed. Bella shook her head and moved her hand. “I hope you’re right, Will.”

They spent the rest of the day traveling. Will returned to the Graham caravan, unwilling to leave it behind. He spent most of that day trying to forget where he was until they arrived in the new town. Most of the carneys had cabin fever after being stuck inside the whole day, and Will wasn’t the only one avoiding the inside of a caravan that night.

Brian, Jimmy and Beverly met him around dusk as they were exploring the field, designating which tents would be where. “And her highness herself, the invincible snake charmer, can have her tent here.” Jimmy proclaimed as he placed the stakes in the ground. Beverly bowed dramatically. “And I’d like my loyal servant to be close to my tent.” She said, grabbing Will’s shoulder as they staked out the mark for his tent. Even through her teasing town, Will felt the protectiveness in her hand on his shoulder. Apparently Jimmy saw it too. “Don’t get paranoid now Bev. Franklyn was an outlier.” He said sternly as he adjusted the stake to the right. “Besides, we’ve almost reached our quota.” Jimmy remarked cheerfully as they turned around the edge of the site. “What do you mean?” Will questioned. “Well, we’ve never lost more than 2 or 3 people in a run. And between Franklyn…and well, your dad… We’re good for the season.” Brian responded haltingly. Will swallowed and Bev clasped his arm while glaring at Brian. “That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t be worried. Franklyn’s death was weird, we all know it. And it’s not like the police are going to look twice at a dead carney.” She grumbled out. “It is not going to happen again.” Brian argued, seeming to think that just saying it out loud could make it true. Beverly shrugged, trudging forward through the high weeds. “I’m just saying, it’s best to be careful.”

The anxiety around the circus continued into the next day as they set up the tents and stands. Jack had come to see Will to bully him into returning to his tent, claiming Bella needed more time to recover. Will carefully picked his way through the empty field. It was the small time when set up had finished but the carneys didn’t need to be in their tents yet. It calmed Will to see it like this, a reminder that behind all the loud crowing of the game stand workers, the booming voices of the barkers, that all the circus consisted of was billowing tent cloth and people. As he turned the corner leading to his tent, he saw Hannibal outside of it.

“Fancy seeing you here.” Will offered as he got closer. Hannibal smiled and followed Will into his tent, watching as Will wandered around setting up the props. “I had hoped to see you before your act started.” Hannibal purred as he sat down in the seat opposite Will’s.

“Wondering if I made a decision yet?” Will muttered, draping the velvet across the tent flap. Hannibal watched him struggle for a moment before getting up and helping. “Yes, I will admit I look forward to hearing you come to a decision. But I also had a much simpler reason; I missed you.” Hannibal replied easily. Will blushed, turning his face away from Hannibal and busying himself with the drapes. “Are you prone to becoming attached so quickly?” Will gritted out, wincing immediately after the words left his mouth. Will turned when he heard Hannibal chuckle lightly. “Not often. But I enjoy your presence very much, dear Will.” Will shook his head to himself as he focused on finishing set up. He heard various voices outside the tent, meaning they were getting closer to start time. Hannibal gently placed his hand on Will’s shoulder, spooking him. “I’ll see you later, Will. Please be careful tonight.” Hannibal said softly, squeezing his shoulder as he left the tent.

Will gave a small sigh of relief as Hannibal left. It wasn’t that he was uncomfortable with the man, and he’d be lying if he said he didn’t enjoy his company, the calming lull of emotions

was relaxing. But the man could be intense. Will finished setting up and wrapped the black silk of his costume around him, sitting at his seat and adjusting the payment tin. He was ready for the night.

Will sighed as he leaned back in his chair. It had been a busy night. Now, nearing ten o'clock, the circus had quieted to a slow stream of people walking past his tent. The first night in a new town was always the busiest, locals testing his abilities and judging whether he was worth listening to or not. He hummed as he shuffled the cards again, hoping to be able to pack it in soon.

"Aye, look at this!" Came a voice outside the tent flap. Will sighed inwardly and turned to face the new comers. There were three men pushing themselves through to the inside of the tent. Their stumbling and heavy scent of alcohol made Will nervous, even as he indicated them to sit in the seats around the table. They fell heavily into their chairs, laughing to each other. "I can only read one at a time." Will said quietly, watching carefully for any change in their jovial expressions. A happy drunk was good for business, and angry drunk was bad for his life. "Me first!" Boasted the man in the middle, leaning forward across the table and dropping some coins into the tin. Will shuffled as he assessed the man. He wore the same rumbled work clothes as his friends, from the looks of the oil on his hands but lack of tan Will deduced he worked at a factory. They were probably just workers from the local town looking to unwind for the evening. Will placed the deck on the table and asked the man to cut the deck. Laughing a bit with his friends, he cut and placed the deck back next to Will.

"First, your past." Will said as he flipped, revealing the ace of wands reversed. "This is a generally positive card. You had great job possibilities, but there is also a downside." Will watched the man's eyes, hooking onto any reaction. "There was a problem at work." Will continued carefully, "A woman that got in the way of your progress." Will finished. One of the man's friends slapped him on the back while the other one guffawed loudly. "That's for sure!" the laughing one managed. The man grinned back at his friends. "That's some fortune." He boasted and turned back to Will. Will flipped the next card. "The present." He said as he flipped the seven of cups. "There's confusion and disorganization in your life right now." Will said, watching the man in the middle frown. His friends at his sides seemed to still be entertained, so he continued. "You are trying to do too much, and as a result not doing it very well." Will watched the man's eye twitch. Will knew from the cards the man was cheating, likely on the woman in the way of his progress. But he didn't want to test the man, especially in front of his friends. "Your…distraction is not going unnoticed." Will finished. The man leaned back in his chair, no longer smiling, but his friends were still laughing and slurring at each other, not noticing the change in their friend. "Now for the future." Will said, resisting the urge to sigh as he saw the card. "The tower. There will be a fall out. Usually this card is regarded as an end card, things described in the past cards will be brought to an end." Will mumbled, twiddling with the edge of the card. The man glared down at Will, unamused. His friends seemed to be sensing the change in air.

"Can't you be a bit more specific?" The man barked. Will bit his lip but continued. "To be frank," Will mumbled, hesitating, "You will likely lose everything. The fall out will take down your job as well as your romantic relations." The men were silent as they regarded Will, the man's friends glancing between their friend and Will. "Relations?" The man on the left said carefully, staring hard at the man in the middle. The man on the right was making shifty eyes between them and Will. "That's quite the fortune, huh." The man in the middle growled, not responding to his friend and keeping his eyes on Will. "I wonder how you knew that stuff." He continued. Will tightened his fingers under the table nervously, getting a feeling of how this was going to be. "Yeah, how'd you know that stuff?" One of the friends

agreed, standing up from the table. The other men followed suit, now all their eyes focused on Will.
Will got up from his chair, backing as far against the tent as he could. “It’s just guessing.” Will mumbled, feeling behind him and praying he had remembered to put his baseball bat in the tent. “You think we’re stupid?” Barked out one man. “A lot more than guessing, pretty boy.” Another scoffed. “How’d you know that stuff?” The man from the middle shouted at him. Will felt more than anger in him, his shout sounded more like fear. “You a goddamn witch?” He blurted out. The other men laughed, but the sound had too much venom. “We should probably show him what we do to witches here.” One of the men said. Will anticipated the movement before it happened, all three men darting to grab him at the same time. Will dodged them easily enough, but unfortunately there was nowhere for him to go with them blocking the tent flap. Will attempted to slip between two men, but they locked their arms and pushed Will back. For a moment Will was reminded of red rover red rover. Two of the men managed to grab Will’s forearms, dragging him out of the tent. Will’s hopes that Beverly was still in her tent was smashed when he saw the closed flaps. Most of the circus had already locked up, the few stragglers already inebriated and not paying attention to Will. He pulled against the men’s hold, but even drunk they were stronger than Will’s scrawny 17 year old frame. They pulled him past his tent, to the walk towards the cars. “Let me go, cmon.” Will bleated, pulling and scratching at the arms holding him. The man from the middle grinned back at him as he led his friends towards the field where most of the cars were parked. Will immediately started shouting and biting at the men’s arms. A man and woman stumbled past him, laughing at the struggle. “Cover his mouth, wouldn’t you?” One of the men snarled. Another pulled a handkerchief and tied it around Will’s mouth. “Why don’t you show us some of those witch powers?” Said one of the men holding his arm, shaking Will. “Yeah, why don’t you cast a spell or something?” Another said as they pulled him closer to the empty lot. Will thought of how this never would have happened if his dad wasn’t here still. They always checked in with each other, and in a new town Douglas always walked Will back to the caravan. He shut his eyes against the tears that threatened to escape. “Aw look, he’s gonna cry.” One of the men snorted. “I’ll give you something to cry about.” Said the other as the man in front stopped walking. They had reached a white car, crappy and unnoticeable in make. Likely the car the men came in.
Will’s attempts to scream were blocked by the handkerchief. He twisted in the men’s arms, almost managing to escape when the man that had led them grabbed him around his waist and yanked him to the ground harshly. As soon as his back hit the concrete, another man’s steel toe boot hit one of this ribs. Will curled instinctively, but managed to kick out at the man’s knew before another one kicked out at him. “Fuck.” Muttered the man who Will had lashed out at as he bent to clutch his knee. “Stupid brat.” Another man growled as two of the men lashed kicks out to Will’s chest. Will felt the breath leave him and gasped as grabbed a man’s leg and sent him spinning. The man hit the ground hard, but the only man standing kicked out again and nailed Will hard in the hip. Will pulled the handkerchief from his mouth and screamed again. The man who was clutching his knee leaned against the car for balance as he kicked with his good leg at Will.
Will caught the leg coming at him and yanked as hard as he could, sending the man to the ground. Will jumped onto the man, fists flying at his chest and face. Blood splattered from his hands as the man standing grabbed him around the waist and hauled him off the man, cursing. Will elbowed back, ready to fight the last man when the arms around him went limp and fell away. Will turned, seeing the man’s body slump to the ground, Hannibal’s hands turning the neck to an unnatural angle.

For a moment all Will did was pant as he looked down at the man's body. Will glanced to Hannibal, seeing nothing in his eyes. Will turned, gaging the other two men on the ground. He watched as Hannibal kneeled next to the one with the battered face, touching the side of his neck. Will's wide eyes followed him as he walked to the man who had landed on the concrete and repeated the motion. "Those two are dead. This one will be very soon without any medical assistance." Hannibal reported evenly, straightening up and smoothing his suit. Will felt his breath come in faster as he attempted to understand Hannibal's words. He had killed him. He had nearly killed two of these men. One of them was dead. Not breathing.
He felt Hannibal watching him curiously as his pants became hyperventilating. Will looked to the ground to steady himself but realized his mistake when he saw the blood caking on his hands. His breathe came in small bursts as he smelled the copper tang in the air. He jumps when he feels Hannibal's clean hands sweep over his red dyed ones. Will thinks again of the color of Hannibal's eyes.
"Will? We should go." Hannibal says softly. Will is malleable as Hannibal guides him away from the bodies, still clutching both of his hands.

Chapter End Notes

So finishing by July 1st was kind of a lofty goal. I'm not sure how long this will be, but I plan on posting a chapter every 2-3 days!

These dead men walk on water

Chapter Summary

> The awful cost of all we lost
> As we looked the other way
> We've paid the price of this cruel device
> Till we've nothing left to pay.
> -"The Angry River" the Hat feat. S.I. Istwa & Father John Misty

Chapter Notes

> This chapter is shorter than I wanted, I planned on writing more but was ill. I'll try to update tomorrow to make up for it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will felt as if he was floating as Hannibal guided him carefully through the circus. It was late at this point, the scraps of trash blowing in the wind and dimmed lights making Will feel even more out of sorts. Will felt dizzy as he was guided to Hannibal's caravan, the dark mahogany seeming black in the night. Hannibal left him sitting in the dining room chair and returned with a bandages and a wet cloth. Will felt him dab at the wounds on his knuckles as he stared dazedly into space. He felt as though his mind should have been running, thinking of the bodies in the parking lot and the repercussions, but all he could feel was blessed emptiness.
"Don't go inside Will." Hannibal murmured beside him, carefully applying salve onto the wounds. "You'll want to retreat, you'll want it as we want to jump from balconies, as the glint of the rails tempts us when we hear the approaching train." Hannibal had ceased his motions and gently placed a hand on Will's cheek. "Stay with me."
Will slowly turned his eyes to Hannibal, watching the quiet ebb of the maroon eyes. "Where else am I going to go?" Will whispered, his voice coming out more broken then he had anticipated. Hannibal's eyes softened. "If you could please remove your shirt, I need to see the extent of the damage to your ribs." Hannibal said, falling back into a comfortingly clinical tone. Will carefully peeled off his coat and shirt, wincing as his the movement stretched his torso. Hannibal gently pressed down on his ribs, blue bruising already blooming. "Nothing is broken, luckily." Hannibal reported as he his fingers tickled down Will's sides. "There are some scratches on your back from your fall onto the ground, however." Hannibal said as Will turned more in his seat. Will sighed as he felt warm water on the wounds on his back. He thinks of the bodies lying in the parking lot and wonders how the circus will react tomorrow. They would leave town, maybe even before seeing the drying blood in the gravel field. Maybe they would leave after seeing it. It was unfortunate but not

entirely uncommon for conflict and death to follow a carnival, it just was usually a carney's blood that is spilt.
Will thinks of the fight. It seemed a blur in his memories, his hands and fists moving without direction from his brain. His father had taught him well enough how to defend himself, and apparently those lessons had sunk in. Will had held his own against the men. Will remembered the pulse in his chest as he had lashed out at the men. The rush of power he felt when he was on top of one of the men, his fists rushing and landing heavily.
Will thinks of Hannibal's hands on the man's neck, quick, precise, and clinical. Practiced. Familiar.
Will felt Hannibal finish with his back and he turned slowly in his chair to meet Hannibal's eyes. Hannibal watched him with curiosity and perhaps a bit of wariness. "You must be getting tired of coming to my rescue." Will began, studying the man in front of him. "I would not consider tonight coming to your rescue. You handled yourself beautifully." Will cocked his head to the side as he considered Hannibal's words. "How long were you there? Watching me?" Will whispered. Hannibal gazed back down at him, a smile curving his features. He reached a hand down to him, resting it on Will's cheek again. "How did you feel, when you were killing that man?" Hannibal coaxed, his thumb rubbing against Will's cheekbone. "I felt a quiet sense of power." Will whispered, leaning into Hannibal's touch. A pleased hum came from the older man and he pulled away a bit, guiding Will to stand. "Good." Hannibal concluded, leaning close enough to Will that he could feel the other man's breath. "Remember that feeling." Will blinked, trying to clear the foggy daze that was covering him. He felt Hannibal's touches and words like gossamer spider webs, small at first but building to bond. "I had to kill them." Will protested softly. "Yes." Hannibal admitted. "But you didn't have to enjoy it."
Will languidly allowed Hannibal to guide him to the other end of the caravan. "You must sleep, dear Will. You've had quite a day." Hannibal proclaimed as he opened the last door. It revealed a neat little room, a bed dressed with crisp navy sheets in the corner. Hannibal guided Will there as he turned to the closet. "I should go back to Beverly's… she'll be worried about me." Will murmured, attempting to protest but not moving from his spot on the bed. Hannibal turned and handed him a red sweater, Will suddenly remembering he was shirtless. "Nonsense. You'll likely wake her if you come back so late. I'd be happy to host you." Hannibal argued as Will tugged the sweater over his head. He hugged it to himself, feeling comforted by the soft warmth. Will felt like he would never feel warm again. Hannibal knelt down beside Will. "I will be in living room if you need anything. Please try to sleep." Hannibal coaxed as he gently brushed his hand across Will's cheek. Will nodded and Hannibal left the room with a murmured goodnight.
Will stripped from his jeans and climbed under the bed sheets, unsurprised to find them incredibly soft and smelling faintly of lavender. He curled onto his back, feeling his ribs ache as he moved. He shuts his eyes and finds the bodies of the dead men behind his eyes. They're eyes have clouded over in his mind, decay flooding over their bodies in the way they will appear in the morning. Will sees Jack kneel next to the bodies, sighing and shaking his head at the trouble that will follow. Blood is caked into the gravel, there is no way to hide this. In his mind's eye Will watches as Jack moves to turn over the man's body. Will eyes flip open as he sees the face of his father in the man, his pale skin beaten and pulpy red.
Will sat up in the bed. He hadn't even fallen asleep yet and his nightmares were finding him. He rubbed his eyes, glaring at the wall as if it could solve his problems. He remembered his father saying on occasion that he was "too tired to sleep" and thinks the expression never seemed truer. He felt the aches of his bones when he lies down, but only wished his head

would quiet enough for rest. He shifted again in the bed, afraid to close his eyes. If he had been in his old caravan, he would read until he fell asleep or do something to occupy the frustration threatening to burst. But he didn’t see anything in the room to distract him and was left to angrily stare at the wall.

Will thought of Hannibal sleeping in the next room on the couch. It hadn’t been long since he left Will, he probably was still awake. Will shook his head, as if to dislodge the thought from his brain. He just needed some sleep. He curled on his side again, eyes slowly closing again.

Chapter End Notes

The tension is killing me, folks. Hopefully in the next chapter we'll earn some of the rating!

Save Me From Everything

Chapter Summary

I can barely speak, black and white bed sheets,
I feel the air retreat; I know you're here with me.
-"Head Head Heart" Meg Myers

Chapter Notes

This was a really tough chapter to write. I am asexual, so this was a little bit weird for me to write, but I tried and I don't think it turned out that bad? Yikes okay with that reassuring note, proceed to the handjobs faithful reader!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Will woke again, his mouth was opened wide in a pant and he was soaked in sweat. For a moment he forgot where he was, could only feel cold hands of fear clutching his chest. Will struggled against the sheets for a moment before falling out of the bed and crouching on the floor defensively. His dream had featured the dead men again, this time each mumbling out confessions of their lives as blood poured from their mouths, teeth stained red. Will had watched as his fists plummeted into the man's face while the man whispered small regrets, *"I left the cream out on the counter. I didn't change the oil in the car. I didn't tell my wife I loved her before I left this morning."* In his dream, Will didn't feel guilty as the man wheezed below him, but powerful in the way he could turn off the man's regrets with one bloody night. Will breathed heavily on the ground as he remembered where he was. It still seemed to be night out, the window revealing a crescent moon hanging in the sky. He couldn't have slept for very long.
Will heard two quick successive knocks on the door. "Will? Are you alright?" Hannibal's concerned voice came from behind the wall. Will's throat clicked as he attempted to respond, no sound coming out. He wasn't even sure what he would have said. "Will? I'm coming in." Will nodded to himself on the ground, accepting that there was likely no way to salvage his dignity. He pulled his knees up to his chest and tried to focus on his breathing. He watched Hannibal as he pushed open the door and spotted Will sitting on the ground. Hannibal cautiously hovered around him, like he was afraid to spook a small animal. "Will? Are you hurt?" He asked, accent heavier from sleep. "I think so." Will managed, his voice coming out small. Hannibal kneeled down next to him, gently curling an arm around his shoulders. Will greedily leaned into the touch. "Are nightmares troubling you Will?" Hannibal said softly, pulling Will into an embrace as they both sat on the ground. Will relented and rested his head into Hannibal's neck.

“I think my conscience is what is troubling me.” Will whispered. Hannibal hummed against his throat and Will felt the vibrations against him. “And what is your conscience telling you?” Hannibal questioned. Will sighed heavily, allowing some tension to leave him. “My conscience is telling me that I should be sorry. My nightmares are reminding me that I’m not.” Will divulged carefully, each word leaving him like a bite. Hannibal’s thumb started gently rubbing on Will’s shoulder, the soft pressure comforting in its simplicity. “Your mind is at wars with what it thinks to be right and what you feel is right. Your conscience will have to adjust itself.” Hannibal said as if it were the simplest thing in the world. Will made a small frustrated noise and leaned more into Hannibal, attempting to curl inside him and hide entirely. Hannibal carefully placed his hand on Will’s jaw, turning his face to his. Will blinked, eyes wide as their breaths puffed so close together. “Let me help you with your war, Will.” Hannibal purred, his eyes molten red. “Let me help you.” And then suddenly their lips were touching, Will leaned into the touch without thinking. The kiss had been chaste at first, a simple touching of lips, Will still and tense beneath the older man, nerves frying his fight or flight reflex. Hannibal gently coaxed Will’s bottom lip with his teeth until they were both gasping for air. Will grabbed the front of Hannibal’s shirt, attempting to ground himself. Hannibal’s hands drifted to Will’s hips, hefting him onto Hannibal’s lap. Will yelped into the other’s mouth, the sound immediately being swallowed by more kisses. Will felt dizzy beneath the attention Hannibal laved onto him, never having been touched like this before. His empathy had been enough to keep him from outsiders, and all of those at the circus thought of him as the young child that joined them. Will felt any thoughts in his head drift out with a moan as Hannibal’s lips found his neck. He shivered as the man’s teeth drifted against his fragile skin. “Han-Hannibal?” Will breathed out, not sure what he was asking. Hannibal responded by snapping his teeth down into the muscle of his neck. Will jumped, the hands at his hips holding him in place on Hannibal’s lap. Will whimpered softly, a sound he heard but didn’t register as coming from his own mouth. Hannibal shushed him as he gently licked against the wound, red staining his lips. As their lips met again, Will tasted the coppery taste of his own blood and moaned. Hannibal’s hand twisted up and down his torso under his sweater, fingers trailing along his ribs. “Off.” Hannibal murmured against Will’s mouth as he lifted the sweater off of him. Hannibal paused after it was gone, looking down at Will trembling in his lap before latching his mouth onto his neck again. “Hannib-bal, please.” Will whimpered again, his hips trying to move from the bruising hands holding him in place. “What do you want darling?” Hannibal purred against his throat, his mouth moving down to Will’s chest. “More, please.” Will moaned, not sure what he was asking for. Hannibal smiled against his collarbone as he continued his ministrations downward. When Hannibal’s hand left his hip and drifted over the buckle of his belt, Will realized that he was achingly hard. Hannibal carefully pulled his buckle free and pressed his hand against Will’s groin. Will clamped a hand over his mouth to stifle the shout behind his lips as he rocked forward into the touch. Hannibal’s mouth returned to his neck, sucking and soothing as he freed Will’s cock from his pants. Will choked out a sob as Hannibal’s hand moved carefully, stroking up and down as Will squirmed in his lap. Hannibal wrapped an arm around Will’s waist when his movement’s threatened to unseat the boy, pulling Will’s face into his neck. Hannibal felt Will’s choked off moans and whimpers hot against his ear as he continued his ministrations. Will writhed against the pleasure, squirming both into the hold and away from it. Hannibal felt every movement of the twisting creature in his lap, hand tightening on his waist. “Beautiful boy.” Hannibal whispered against Will’s neck, peppering kisses there as he twisted and pulled at Will’s cock. “I think- I’m- I’m gonna-“Will choked out as warmth pooled in his abdomen. “Go ahead, dear Will.” Hannibal soothed as he tightened his hold. Will gave a

choked shout as he came, shaking as Hannibal stroked him through it. Will relaxed in Hannibal's hold, all his muscles giving up at once. Hannibal relaxed his arm around his waist and gently rubbed up and down his back as Will came down. "Shh." He purred against Will's cheek as he shook in his arms. He lifted Will's face to his, looking into the glassy blue eyes staring back at him and smiled, leaning in to gently kiss him. Will barely responded, still shocked from the orgasm that had ripped through him. Hannibal wiped his hand against the sheets on the ground, shifting the panting wreck in his lap. Will gasped into the other's mouth as he felt the hard line of Hannibal's erection against his thigh. He hesitantly reached down, unsure what to do to reciprocate when Hannibal stopped him. "Not tonight, Will. Right now you need your sleep." Hannibal assured as he carefully untangle their limbs and stood, guiding Will up as well. Will swayed on his feet, unsteady until Hannibal directed him to the bed. "Will you stay?" Will hesitantly murmured, trying to keep the beg from his voice. Hannibal smiled fondly and stroked Will's cheek softly. "Of course, mylimasis. Lay down." Will collapsed onto the bed, followed by Hannibal. Will kept stealing small kissed as they rearranged themselves onto the bed, Will curled against Hannibal's chest. "I might have more nightmares." Will lamented sleepily as Hannibal sweetly pressed a kiss against his forehead. "I will be here if you do." The man responded as he ran his hands through Will's curls. Will smiled at the sensation and fell asleep quickly, reassured by Hannibal's presence.

Chapter End Notes

Hannibal rewarding Will for a murder well done #justmurderhusbandthings

And It Festers on the Fire

Chapter Summary

> He's always walked this tightrope
> between the devil and the deep blue sea
> a monkey on a wire.
> -"The Man on the Burning Tightrope" Firewater

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The next morning Will woke slowly. Usually his rest was interrupted quickly and brightly; flashes of nightmares behind his eyes. But this morning he woke softly, light blinking behind his eyes as he shifted on the mattress beneath him. Last night came back to him in a similar way, memories floating in. When Will remembered the men in the parking lot, he felt his heart quicken. He sat up in the bed, rubbing his eyes and finding himself alone in the room. Will slowly eased himself from the warmth of the bed, pulling on the red sweater that he had left on the ground.

He pushed out through the door of the room to find Hannibal at the kitchen stove with a frying pan. Will blushed as he saw the man, standing in only sleep pants and remembering last night. He wondered if it would happen again, or of this was just a way Will padded further into the kitchen, sitting at the table. Hannibal turned and smiled, “Good morning Will. How did you sleep?” He rumbled, his accent slightly heavier than usual. “Better than I expected.” Will mumbled warily, not sure where they stood with each other. And Hannibal was giving away nothing. Will sighed, laying his head on the table, sleep still in the corners of his mind. He felt Hannibal place a mug next to his head and Will smiled appreciatively.

“I’m glad to see your nightmares didn’t bother you.” Hannibal continued, placing a plate of food before Will. Will looked down at the plate, hesitantly pushing the food around as Hannibal sat down across from him. “Thank you for breakfast, you didn’t have to.” Will mumbled nervously, keeping his eyes pointedly down at his plate.

“Of course, Will. I enjoy cooking for you.” Hannibal said as he cut through his ham. Will sighed as he tried his own food. He didn’t want to ask Hannibal straight out what they were, he didn’t want to assume anything. Last night could have been nothing. It could have been as simple as a stab at trying to get Will to calm down. With Hannibal, Will couldn’t assume anything. “Have you heard from the circus yet? About the men?” Will asked, trying to climb onto a new subject. Hannibal nodded around his mug of coffee. “Jack was here earlier this morning to inform me there was an accident, and we wouldn’t be leaving town today. I told him you were here with me, as to not cause him worry.” Will paused with a forkful of food halfway to his mouth. “Did he…comment on that?” Will questioned. Will watched as Hannibal considered his words. “He seemed pleased that you were considering the offer of going with me to Europe.” Hannibal parsed carefully. Will snorted at the response. “Yeah, I’m sure that’s all he had to say.” Will huffed as he picked his plate up and put it into the sink,

sighing as he leaned against the counter. “Will.” Hannibal said carefully as he stood to stand next to him, leaning lightly against his shoulder. “You know I will be leaving soon.” Will shut his eyes as he felt Hannibal gently stroke at the junction of Will’s neck and shoulder. “After the events of last night, I would greatly consider coming with me. You wouldn’t have to worry.” Hannibal persuaded against his ear, his lips close enough to touch. Will sighed for what felt like the one hundredth time that morning. He knew Hannibal was right, leaving to Europe with him would probably be the smartest idea. But leaving his home? All his friends and family? He tried to imagine never seeing Beverly again, or Jimmy and Brian.
“I’m thinking about it.” Will said finally, straightening and walking away from Hannibal to look out the window. Everyone was milling about the tents, gossiping about the bodies found in the parking lot no doubt. Will tried to imagine joining in with the conversation even when he knew exactly what happened. He felt Hannibal behind him again and felt a twinge of annoyance at his persistence. “I only want what is best for you, Will.” Will heard the accented voice from over his shoulder. “That’s what people always say, no matter if it’s true or not.” He snorted bitterly, keeping his eyes outside the window. “In this case it is true.” Hannibal placed a finger under his chin and turned him to face blood red eyes. Hannibal stroked along Will’s cheekbones, feeling the light stubble that had collected since last night. “I care for you very much, Will. I would have thought last night would convince you of that.” Hannibal continued, finishing it with a kiss to Will’s forehead. Will blushed bright red and ducked his head. “Is that what last night was?” Will murmured, desperately avoiding eye contact. Hannibal chuckled above him. “Dear Will, if I was not clear of my intentions towards you I apologize.” Hannibal curled his arm around Will’s waist and leaned into him. “Your mind is fascinating, and I would find myself at fault if I didn’t try everything to get you by my side for longer.” Will blinked at him, scrutinizing the honesty in his voice. “Not to mention you are the most beautiful creature I have ever seen.” Hannibal finished, grinning slightly. Will felt his blush darken and he regretted having this conversation. “Such a sweet talker.” Will teased, trying to pull away but finding Hannibal’s arm tighten. Will looked up at him with concern, trying to read the expression in his eyes. Hannibal eventually sighed and loosened his grip with another kiss to his hairline. “You should check in with Beverly and Jack before they get too worried.” Will nodded and started to extract himself from Hannibal’s arms. “And Will?” Hannibal warned as Will headed out. “I don’t need to tell you what a terrible idea mentioning the men in the parking lot to anyone would be, do I?” Will soundlessly shook his head as he left the caravan.
When Will came into Beverly’s caravan to get into some new clothes, he was met with his roommate blocking the entire hallway with her hands on her hips. Will watched warily as she stared at him, a hard look on her face. “And just where have you been all night?” She said eventually, after she apparently felt the silence had made its point. “I just stayed at Hannibal’s caravan for the night. No big deal.” Will awkwardly shuffled his feet as Beverly decided to renew her stare. “I’d say it’s a bit of a big deal. Kind of a big deal when you disappear for the whole night. Especially after finding the bodies this morning.” Will feigned surprise. “What bodies?” He gasped out, trying to manage to sound alarmed but not too overdramatic. Beverly’s features softened at the question. “Well, yeah. They found three bodies in the parking lot. No one recognizes them so they must have been customers. Police have been all over Jack since early morning.” She conceded, anger gone from her words. Will nodded solemnly, trying for confusion on his features. “Do they know what happened?” He questioned, flashes of the bloodied man’s face under his fists behind his eyes. “Not yet. The men had some disagreements in town, police don’t think it’s related to the circus.” Beverly soothed as she grasped Will’s shoulder, trying for comfort. Will smiled at her grimly, not

faking the slight disgust he was feeling. “You should talk to Jack, he was worried about you this morning. You’re lucky he thought to ask Hannibal before he reported you missing to the police.” Beverly worried. Will nodded. “I was just going to head out.” He said as he walked past her to grab fresh clothes. Beverly watched him for a second as he pulled out clean clothes. “Where’d that sweater come from?” She asked eventually, a suspicious curve to her voice. Will was thankful his back was to her as he blushed beet red. “I was cold last night, Hannibal lent me it.” Will answered, aiming for casual. “Sure.” Bev snorted as she headed to her own room. Will winced. That wasn’t the end of that conversation.

Chapter End Notes

Yikes I didn't mean to take so long updating! It's been a busy week, I had to get some tests done when my illness got worse. I'll be sure to post another chapter soon to make up for it! We are nearing the end, I don't expect this to go much more than 10 chapters.

With Diabolical Things

Chapter Summary

So I asked this lovely creature
Yes, I asked. Yes I asked
Would she walk with me a while
Through this night so vast....
The wind lashed and it whipped me
When I got home, my lovely creature
She was no longer with me.
-"Lovely Creature" Nick Cave

Chapter Notes

Okay ya'll, forewarning we earn that E rating in this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will banged on the door to the Crawford caravan with the fragile hope that Jack might not be there. That Will could avoid the conversation for as long as possible. Those hopes were dashed when Will heard Jack's voice call him in from behind the door. Will sighed, giving himself a moment to steady himself before pushing in through the door. He walked up the steps to find Jack sitting at the dining table, bent heavily over as he sorted through the papers littered along the surface. The man glanced up at Will as he walked in, gesturing for him to sit opposite him.
Will warily sat as Jack sighed tightly and rubbed his eyes. "It's been a busy day." Jack started, and Will winced at his harsh tone. "I'm sure you know why." Will swallowed and nodded. "I've heard." He muttered, aiming for calm but his nerves broke his voice. Jack studied him. "You stayed in Lecter's caravan last night?" Will nodded fidgeted with the edge of the table. "Why." Jack made it sound less like a question and more like an interrogation. "I just wanted to visit him after I worked the tent. You wanted me to think about the proposal didn't you? I wanted to know more about the circus." Will retorted defensively, feeling uncomfortable with the way Jack was looking at him. He seemed to think Will had killed the men, but how did he know that? "So nothing happened at your tent?" Jack barked. Will blinked and leaned back in his chair. "Are you accusing me of something, Jack?" Jack met his glare evenly. "I'm not accusing you of anything. I'm just trying to get to the bottom of things." Jack dropped his gaze and stared down at the papers again, as if they had all the answers he needed.
"You know that your family is always here at the circus, Will. But maybe it's time for you to

move on. See more of the world, stop being so tethered." Jack started, aiming for a placating tone. "You think I've become a liability. You want to get rid of me." Will scoffed. Jack threw his arms in the air, startling Will. "Am I wrong?" Jack shouted, his voice vibrating sharply in the silence after. Immediately after, Jack seemed remorseful. "Will, I didn't mean-" "No, by all means, say what you mean." Will interrupted his half apology. "If I can see it, so can everyone else. You're just trying to pawn off your broken pony to some other stable. It's fine." Will choked out, his tone vibrating with rage. "No, Will. Since your father… Jack tried again, but Will really didn't want to hear the rest. "Oh, since my father died? Mt father who literally gave his life to this circus?" Jack's eyes seemed to bug out of his head at that and Will felt the smallest bit of satisfaction. "I'm just trying to look out for what's best for you!" Jack shouted again. Will flinched and stood, slamming the chair behind him. "I'm pretty damn tired of hearing people say that." Will ground out, heading for the door despite Jack's weak protests. "Don't worry Jack, I'll be out of your hair as soon as possible."
****

Will spent most of the rest of the day catching up with some of his friends at the circus, and trying to memorize them all. To be honest, he felt like he was already half way out of the door. Will didn't want to admit it, but ever since he had gotten the offer he had already felt like he was leaving. After the fight with Jack, he knew he couldn't stay. He visited Reba first. She teared up a little and hugged him, telling him to have fun and be safe. That was a semi easy goodbye. For the next one, with Brian, Bev and Jimmy, he brought a lot of beer and snacks and hoped that they wouldn't see right through his plan to get them drunk first.
They were spread out on the floor, music playing from the record player in the corner of Brian and Jimmy's caravan. They had made it through both six packs and had started on some whiskey Bev had stowed away. They had carefully avoided any topic relating to either Jack or the bodies in the parking lot, but Beverly had jumped right onto the Hannibal topic. "So Will." She slurred, turning pointedly to Will even though Brian and Jimmy had been in the middle of discussing the merits of butter based or lard based pie crusts. "Are you going to be running off to a Europeon honeymoon with Lecter?" Will groaned and lay his head in his arms. "Kinda what I got you guys drunk to talk about." He mumbled into his sleeves. Bev poked him as Brian and Jimmy paused their argument. "Are you actually gonna leave with him?" Brian asked. Will looked up weakly at them and nodded. "Jack and I got in a fight.." Will trailed off as Brian sighed and handed Jimmy a 20 dollar bill. "You seriously bet on if he was leaving or not?" Bev laughed. "Of course we did. You were on the fence for weeks." Jimmy retorted as he pocketed the money. "But seriously. Are you sure?" Bev said, attempting to look concerned at Will. It came out a little weak because of her third shot of whiskey. Will nodded solemnly and Bev smiled. "Good. I expect you to send me gifts from Europe." She said as she launched herself onto Will in a mix between a hug and a tackle. "Chocolates from Germany! And clothes from Paris!" Jimmy demanded as he joined the tackle. Brian snorted as Jimmy dragged him into the group pile as well. Will laughed as he listened to the rest of their requests and tried not to cry about leaving them behind.
****

Will stumbled about the circus field a bit before he wandered to Hannibal's caravan. It was late now; he had left his friends when their little party had died down. Will still felt a pleasant buzz from the alcohol in his veins but most of it had worn off. He trailed along the dusty paths, smiling at the lights and stands that had been his home for eight years. No matter where they had moved to, it always felt like home.
He knocked heavily on Hannibal's door, leaning his forehead on the doorframe. Hannibal smiled as he opened the door to see Will. "Hello Will. I wasn't sure of you would visit me

tonight.” Will smiled back crookedly, following Hannibal into the caravan. “I would have come sooner, but I had some goodbyes to make.” Hannibal turned to him, inscrutable as he arched a pale eyebrow. “Does that mean that you have chosen to leave with me?” Hannibal murmured, hesitant hope. Will’s grin widened as he moved closer to Hannibal, faces inches apart. “It does.” There was a flicker of delight across Hannibal’s face before he pulls Will closer, placing a tender kiss upon his lips. “I promise you won’t regret this, Will.” He whispered as he pulled the younger against his chest. Will smiled against Hannibal’s lips as he pulled him into another kiss. The sweet tender kisses devolved to desperation as Will went boneless against the Hannibal’s arms, whimpering as he bit along his lower lip. “You will love Europe, my darling.” Hannibal mumbled against his lips as he pulled away to kiss along Will’s jaw. Hannibal gasped against his neck as Will grinded his hips forward. Hannibal pulled away for a moment, stilling Will’s hips as the younger whimpered at the loss of contact and leaned closer. “Bedroom.” Hannibal managed between catching his breath, pulling Will in the direction of the end of the caravan. Hannibal was upon him as soon as they passed through the door, running his hands under the younger’s shirt while pulling moans from his lips. “Hannibal.” Will gasped brokenly as Hannibal attacked his neck again, pulling bruising marks from his pale skin. Hannibal’s hands pulled at the buttons of his flannel, continuing his ministrations on the new skin revealed. “Hannibal, pl-please.” Will choked out brokenly as Hannibal’s hands and mouth seemed to be everywhere at once, the older man’s arms snaked around his waist and trailing his ribs. “Shh. I’ll take good care of you.” Came the growled out response as he pushed Will towards the bed. Will yelped as he landed on his back across the navy sheets, but his mouth was immediately taken by Hannibal again. Will whined as his hands pulled against Hannibal’s waistcoat, clutching as well as trying to pull it off. Hannibal chuckled against his lips at the attempts, the vibration trailing along Will’s throat. Hannibal pulled away to unbutton his waistcoat, eyes locked on Will’s wide blue eyes. Will whined, wiggling to try to get closer to the body that left him. Hannibal smirked from above him, placing a placating kiss on his lips as he managed to pull off his shirt as well. Will reached his hands out to run them along the broad chest revealed to him, but Hannibal leaned down again, pulling them close again. Will shivered as their bare chest rubbed against each other, Hannibal’s teeth finding his neck again. “What do you want, mylimasis?” Hannibal soothed as his teeth gnawed at behind Will’s ear. “A-anything, ple-please.” Will stuttered as Hannibal’s hips grinded down against his, the friction of his jeans delicious. “Anything?” Hannibal responded, his hand snaking down to Will’s crotch. Will’s hips bucked as Hannibal cupped him there, a moan leaving his mouth. Hannibal’s hand moved upward and pulled at the zipper of Will’s jeans, flicking them open easily and pulling them off as well as his boxers. Will blushed at the sudden exposure, but Hannibal was against him soon enough, soothing kisses against his lips until Will’s tension dissolved. Hannibal’s hand trailed from his ribs south, feeling along to his lower back. Will choked off a moan as the hand squeezes at his ass, Hannibal’s teeth biting into his mouth at the same time. The hand skittered down, to the soft place between Will’s legs. Will gasped as Hannibal’s fingers trailed between his cheeks. “Do you want this?” Hannibal asked, fingers dragging over puckered skin. “Yes, yes, plea-please.” Will whimpered, blushing red along his cheeks. Hannibal smiled fondly down at him, chastely kissing him as he leaned off of him to reach into the bedside table for something, The separation was long enough to keep Will from distraction, his mind catching up with him. Will nervously fisted his hands into the sheets below him. Hannibal’s face returned to its place above him, sensing Will’s anxiety and smiling fondly. He dropped the bottle beside him and reached both hands to cup Will’s cheeks and kiss him deeply. Will groaned into the kiss, gasping for breath as they separated.

“We don’t have to.” Hannibal softly murmured, his hand stroking along Will’s jaw. Will nodded his head as he wrapped an arm around Hannibal’s neck and pulled him into a kiss. “I want to.” Hannibal grabbed the bottle again, reaching again between Will’s legs. Will winced as he felt the first slippery finger touch his skin, but the digit only dragged against the puckered skin. Will moaned loudly as it finally slipped inside, Hannibal carefully pulling and stretching at sensitive skin. Will leaned up to kiss Hannibal, needing a distraction from the strange sensation. Hannibal bit at his bottom lip as they slipped a second finger in, the intrusion making Will gasp and squirm. Hannibal’s other hand tightened on Will’s hips, holding him in place. Will trailed his fingers along Hannibal’s back as the fingers crooked and moved within him, hitting a spot that made his mouth fall open to choked off shout. Hannibal’s lips returned to his neck as he moved his fingers to the spot again, giving Will no time to collect himself as he moaned again, his hips moving back against the intrusion. “Ready?” Hannibal asked, smiling at Will’s eager nods. Hannibal leaned back to pull of his own slacks and boxers. Will clutched at the sheets beneath him, his nerves pulling at the strings of lust that threatened to overwhelm him. He shut his eyes tight as he felt Hannibal press against his opening, trying to keep his breath from coming out as gasps. “Shhh, relax.” Hannibal murmured against his ear as he started to press in. Will took deep breaths as he tried to ignore the burn, Hannibal’s small kisses against his neck fleeting and distracting. “There we go, you’re doing so well.” Hannibal encouraged as he bottomed out, staying still until Will’s breath evened out. Once he was sure Will had adjusted, Hannibal eased out slowly only to snap back in. Will gasped sharply, the friction warming his lower abdomen. Hannibal relentlessly moved in and out, the gentleness of earlier forgotten at the small sounds spilling from Will’s mouth. Will clutched at his back, grappling for a hold as he lost himself in the sensations. “Han-Hannibal.” Will moaned as the older man found that spot again, his orgasm pooling in his lower abdomen. Hannibal growled as his hand tightened possessively on his hip, roughly pulling him closer to meet each thrust. “My Will.” Hannibal grunted as he drove against the spot again and again, Will choking off sobs at the overwhelming feeling. “You’re mine now. No one else. Do you understand?” Hannibal barked out as he reached a hand between them to stroke across Will’s cock. Will nodded violently, hands tightening at Hannibal’s neck at the dual sensations. “My beautiful boy.” Hannibal licks at his neck before sinking his teeth in. Will came, wailing at the pain and pleasure that Hannibal delivered. Dazed, Will was boneless as Hannibal thrust despite the oversensitivity. Distantly he feels Hannibal come as well, warmth filling him. Hannibal collapsed against him, the weight reassuring against Will as he returned to reality. “Lovely creature.” Hannibal whispered against his forehead, placing a kiss there before getting up to retrieve a wash cloth. Will whines at the loss of warmth but waits patiently to be cleaned up. Hannibal finished and lay back down, pulling Will against his chest again. “Are you alright dear?” Hannibal whispered as he stroked through Will’s curls. “Better than alright.” Will murmurs, his voice coming out hoarser than he expected. Hannibal smiles fondly down at him, mouth moving to toy at the dark teeth marks on the boy’s skin. “I’m very pleased you are leaving with me.” Will laughed at that, curling tighter to Hannibal’s side. “I got that.” Hannibal chuckled along with him, nipping lightly at Will’s lips. “Go to sleep, love. We have a big day tomorrow.” Will smiled at the prospect, letting his eyelids flutter shut and fell asleep to the sound of Hannibal’s heartbeat.

Chapter End Notes

Why is smut so hard for me to write? I wrote half this chapter three days ago but couldn't bring myself to finish it until now. Anyway, one more chapter to wrap up!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!